

AB 599 Public Advisory Committee

**Cal/EPA Building
Sierra Hearing Room
Sacramento, California**

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

Convene Meeting

The meeting began at 9:35 a.m. Members of the PAC, staff and the public introduced themselves.

Review Agenda and Approve May 29 and July 24, 2002 Meeting Summaries

Steve Ekstrom, PAC facilitator, described the agenda for the day, pointing out that there is likely to be overlap in the two primary discussions, funding alternatives and increasing efficiencies.

Meeting summaries for May 29 and July 24, 2002, were approved as mailed.

Discussion: Resource Needs – “Estimate Funding Necessary” and “Ongoing Source of Funds” (per AB 599) and Increasing Efficiencies – Combination of Reporting Efforts: DWR’s Bulletin 118 with SWRCB’s Groundwater Quality portion of the 305(b) Report to USEPA

James Giannopoulos reviewed the content of the report due to the Legislature in March 2003, then proposed that the comprehensive groundwater monitoring program include a “Biennial California Groundwater Report.” This proposal had been approved by the ITF. The SWRCB would take the lead role to ensure that the entire biennial report is completed. It would be comprised of two major sections: water quality (CA 305(b) equivalent) prepared by the SWRCB in coordination with other ITF agencies, and water quantity (Bulletin 118 equivalent) prepared by DWR. The biennial report would represent the AB 599 directive for efficiency. It would draw on existing programs of the ITF agencies and provide an impetus for sharing and leveraging data and expertise in interpretation.

Comments from the PAC included:

- Is this report “new work” or a reformatting of existing work? The response was that it was both. Currently the 305(b) and 118 reports are not done on a scheduled basis. Some additional work would be necessary to create a biennial groundwater report. The biennial report would represent collaboration between SWRCB and DWR, the ITF, and several other agencies. This will make for a more valuable report.
- Does this mean more data will need to be collected? Response: Most likely in some cases, depending on the assessment of existing data.

- This is a good idea, but the issue is the level of detail, and who is the audience.
- A combined report is a good place to start with respect to future structural changes.
- What is the current funding for 305(b) report? Response: virtually none. SWRCB's GAMA program is developing information that can build a useful 305(b) report. However, the GAMA previous year's budget of \$2.8 million is facing significant cutbacks related to the current condition of the general fund.
- What is the current funding for Bulletin 118? Response: there was \$3 million available for 3 years, but that has been used up.

James G. discussed Proposition 50 on the November 2002 ballot, noting that \$50 million has been earmarked for AB 599 related groundwater monitoring - if it passes. At the July PAC meeting, Theo Cline (Assemblymember Carol Liu's assistant) expressed concern that the PAC and ITF would need to have a program ready very soon in order to take full advantage of potential program funding. To address her concern, the ITF evaluated Proposition 50 and has proposed to initiate the program over a five year period using these potential funds.

During this initial five-year period, the ITF under SWRCB leadership (through GAMA) would assess groundwater basins representing approximately 80% of the total statewide groundwater usage. The funding would also include the preparation of the proposed Biennial Groundwater Report. Additional funding alternatives/scenarios were also briefly presented including 1) no additional GAMA funding (with potential cutbacks) and 2) continued funding through potential legislative augmentations. Under the no additional funding scenario, approximately one to two basins could be assessed per year; while an undetermined quantity could be assessed under the other scenario.

Comments from the PAC included:

- Proposition 50, if it passes, will require implementation legislation. And it's important to note that "up to \$50 million" would be available. It could be less than \$50 million.
- How would the bulk of the money be spent? Response: On contracts for monitoring, data assessment and some sampling.
- If staff positions are cut, perhaps the funding could be used to fill those positions and more monitoring could be done "in house."
- Program administration is probably capped at 4%.
- What gets "bought" for \$50 million under the ITF's proposal? Response: a better understanding of the high priority basins, i.e. 80% of groundwater usage in California.
- What happens in year six when the \$50 million is spent? Response: we would hope to have procured other funding sources; we need the PAC to advise on this – what other sources might we tap or create?
- Perhaps we could use some portion of the \$50 million for grants to basins that are already doing a good job and just need a little help with their existing program.

- \$50 million for 50 to 100 basins seems like a lot of money for so few basins. Perhaps it's better to monitor more basins with less intensity than it is to monitor fewer basins with greater intensity. Response: It is the starting point of the program. All basins would eventually be assessed - if there is adequate funding.

At this point Carl Hauge from DWR, an ITF member, provided information on DWR (Bulletin 118, Bulletin 160). The primary purpose of his presentation was to stress the importance of having a fundamental knowledge of groundwater quantity in order to assess groundwater quality.

Carl H. gave a primer on groundwater, e.g., the difference between watersheds and groundwater basins, significance of aquifer depths, functions of groundwater systems, etc. In addition, Carl described DWR's assessment of California's over 500 groundwater basins by type:

- Type A Groundwater Basin: a lot of information is known on 70 basins. (Note: Type A basins are the most heavily used and account for approximately 80% of groundwater usage statewide).
- Type B Groundwater Basin: some data is available on 138 basins.
- Type C Groundwater Basin: little, if any, data is available on 303 basins.

Carl H. also suggested that the PAC members address in this meeting a couple of questions:

1. In your opinion, what should be included in a groundwater basin assessment?
2. How would you choose which basins should be assessed?

PAC members suggested a third question:

3. What alternative funding mechanisms might we recommend?

PAC members decided to address these questions in small breakout groups after the lunch break.

Public Comment

Members of the public were asked if they had any comments. Comments included:

- Regarding the comprehensive monitoring program and Proposition 50, the proposals by the ITF are a good start. You might also want to consider sustainability of the program after Prop 50 funds are consumed, and perhaps you should look at a sustained program within existing state or federal agencies, i.e., link the program to existing budgets.
- We need to view trends over time. Response: We have a lot of data that hasn't been evaluated for trends. Much data's there, it just hasn't been used in this way due to lack of funding.

Breakout Groups

To the question, “In your opinion, what should be included in a groundwater basin assessment?” PAC members responded with:

- Everything needed for developing a groundwater flow model, e.g., hydrology, basin extent, aquifer extent, depths, boundaries.
- Groundwater production information
- Land use/demographics: existing and trends
- Number and depth of wells (public and private)
- Well log data
- Quantity of water extracted
- Metadata
- Recharge sources, e.g., precipitation, irrigation, injection
- Baseline/initial screen with directed follow-up monitoring based on the baseline

To the question, “How would you choose which basins should be assessed?” PAC members responded with:

- Assess risk/vulnerability considering the following factors:
 - Number of people using groundwater in that basin
 - Location of contaminant sources
 - Current state of water usage, and future growth
 - How much data already exist
 - Natural vs. other sources of contamination, e.g., human
- Type A and B basins (DWR’s coding) should have a higher priority over Type C basins
- Volume used or rate of exchange
- Degree of depletion/overdraft
- Basins that serve mostly private wells
- Basins that don’t have a back-up supply

To the question, “What alternative funding mechanisms might we recommend?” PAC members responded with:

- Look closer at the \$50 million/5 year proposal; it’s a short term funding mechanism, and it’s still on the ballot – it’s not real yet.
- A legislative solution is unlikely in the current fiscal climate
- Consider augmentation fees, e.g.,
 - Water well drilling installation fees
 - Development (industrial, housing); e.g., reduce the 500 units or more requirement
 - Garbage disposal (landfill tipping fees)
 - Air quality polluters
 - Charging for groundwater extraction

But we need to develop the “story” better in order to create support for fees.

Next followed a discussion of the overall ITF proposal. In general PAC members liked it, but felt that other alternatives should be considered before they can endorse it.

Alternatives might include what could be done if significantly less funding were available, or if more than \$50 million were available. And what does “comprehensive” mean? The ITF suggests it means an intensive look at fewer basins, but perhaps it could mean a less intensive look at all basins over a longer period of time.

After more discussion it was suggested that a matrix of alternatives be developed for the next PAC meeting. Across the top would be funding alternatives, from a lowest level that just accounts for integrating databases into GeoTracker, to a level higher than \$50 million that would represent the ideal comprehensive monitoring program. A few alternatives in between these lower and upper limits would be good. Down the left side of the matrix could be a variety of factors/activities, including:

- Integrating data into GeoTracker
- Basin assessments (evaluations); biennial groundwater report, based on data in GeoTracker and possibly new sampling data
- Assessing data collected by local agencies
- Comprehensiveness: geographic (cover all basins) vs. intense examination of fewer basins
- Database tools
- Other augmentations
- Information (program data access) to the public
- Cost of groundwater monitoring
- Grant program
- Data tithing/fees

Each alternative might also include funding assumptions, as well as baseline GIS coverage.

PAC Discussion: Interface with Local Water Agencies

Because of the length of the previous discussion it was decided that this agenda item would be addressed in October. In order to have a productive discussion, PAC members will be asked to submit their thoughts on this matter by email (staff will send a reminder). Comments will be summarized and distributed prior to the October meeting.

Establish Next PAC Meeting Agenda

The PAC decided that the October meeting should be two days, October 28 and 29 (Monday and Tuesday). *IMPORTANT NOTE: this is a schedule change. The meeting had originally been planned for October 23 – that meeting is cancelled so that a two-day meeting on October 28 and 29 can be held with higher attendance.*

The following items will be on the two-day agenda:

- Review and discuss the funding alternatives matrix

- Reactions/Comments to draft Report to Legislature Chapters 1 through 5 (these will be emailed to PAC members)
- USGS presentation on prioritizing groundwater basins and constituents to be sampled.
- Discussion of the involvement of local water agencies in the future program with the ITF/GRIST
- A summary of PAC recommendations to date

Public Comment

Members of the public were asked if they had any comments. Comments included:

- Consider what data you'll need to validate the hydrogeologic/groundwater flow model
- Regarding the involvement of the University of California, perhaps students could work through Lawrence Livermore Laboratory since it's part of the UC system.
- How can you cost out alternatives if you don't know what the data gaps are?

Evaluate Meeting and Adjourn

Members liked the breakout groups as it gave each person more of an opportunity to express their points of view, and it allowed for deeper conversation, at times. It was decided that we should employ breakout groups in October, perhaps at the beginning of the meeting, and at other strategic times throughout the two days.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.